

Aziz Gürpınar's Blog on the Governor's Institute on Vermont

Who would have known that a trip like this would change my perspective of the world to such an extent? At first, I was too prejudiced about the United States. I thought it was a country where almost no one is sober, most people are idle and many other stereotypes like that. Then, things changed. First of all, I met many people. I have 13 GREAT Turkish friends from all over Turkey. I have AWESOME friends from Ireland, Germany, Israel and various parts of the US. There were more than 80 people at the institute, but we were like family. I feel like I have known them for years. I would love to talk about each of them but it would take ages.

Partaking in this program opened my mind. I had the time of my life! I don't know of any other place where I can have so much fun and learn at the same time. Let me tell you about some of the activities we did. We had a mock congress, where each of us was a senator and we were the ones to decide if the bill should pass or not. Each staff member came beside us; they were the part of the game. This was what I liked about them: they were not just staff members. They were actors/actresses, guides, dancers, friends etc. All in one! At night, we had a campfire; I had a marshmallow for the first time in my life! It was very delicious!

July 4th was simply AMAZING!!! It was a great day! After making our signs for July 4th, we were all so excited (yes, including the international students, though we had never celebrated it before). On the actual day, we held our signs, excited for the parade, and after hours of chanting, walking, and making our voice heard, we had a picnic in a very good place. We were able to feel the spirit of July 4th: the parade, BBQ, fireworks, the fun! We went canoing, it was another great experience for me. I was in the same canoe as two Israeli friends of mine, we had so much fun! These are only few of the things we did.

Thanks to this program, I am much more open-minded. I knew about most of the issues we talked about at GIV but I had no one to talk to as these issues are highly ignored in Turkey. I could live in the U.S. forever. When I got back home (I traveled over three continents in one day), it didn't feel like home. I had culture shock in my own country.

Everything was great. I want to go back in time and live every second of the time I spent there once again, but I don't want to change a second! Everything was as great as it could be. It couldn't be any better than this. If you're reading this and willing to take part in this program, all I can say is that you are SO lucky! Leave your prejudices aside and experience the opportunity to change!

Aziz Gürpınar
Trabzon
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My sign for July 4th



At the closing banquet



My and my international friends



In the dorm at night